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ABSTRACT

This document presents an overview of a survey conducted to determine the educational and social role of interschool sports in the secondary schools of Ontario, Canada. The study is based on the theory that the goal of most youth sports organizations is participation--to get as many children involved as possible. Conversely, professional-athletic organizations strive for elite athletics rather than mass participation. The behavior of the sports organization frequently does not facilitate the goal of participation, and the result is dysfunctional conflict. Primarily four variables serve as obstacles and bring pressure to bear upon the behaviour of those involved in the sport organization: the structure of the organization, the individuals and groups within the organization, stress from society at large, and strain from those within the organization. These variables are examined as they affect interschool sports competition. (JD)

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Socializing Sport or Athletic Excellence: The Role of Interschool Sports in the Secondary Schools of Ontario*

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AUDIO

VIDEO & E.T.

FELT NEED FOR THE STUDY: The University of Windsor serviced the Ministry of Education by bringing together an interdisciplinary task force of University Researchers and Professional Educator from throughout the Province to conduct a study on "The Role of Interschool Sport in the Secondary Schools of Ontario." This study was funded by the Ministry of Education and conducted by Windsor's Sport Institute for Research by means of Change Agent Research (SIR/CAR).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM: As you know the ultimate purpose of any project is to find solutions to problems. I should mention that the need for the study originated at the grass roots level in Southwestern Ontario. And the study was endorsed by the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations and the Ontario Ministry of Education. The report which arose from the study is entitled The Role of Interschool Sports Programs in the Secondary Schools of Ontario. The conclusions and recommendations which are advocated aim, first, at allocating scarce resources in an effective and efficient way, and secondly at formulating these recommendations into resolutions which can be considered by the Ministry of Education.

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The approach which is used is similar to the school of thought which advocates management by objectives. Goals should be achieved by optimal means. This is an approach which is absolutely necessary in an era of educational accountability.

This research project also makes recommendations for future research. This research could be conducted in various ways. A cross sectional analysis in the Province of Ontario is a possibility as well as a longitudinal study. A third alternative may encompass a cross ministry study which would involve educational school sport which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and amateur athletics which fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Culture and Recreation. This would be especially significant in view of the need for more co-operation between the community and the schools.

OUTLINE OF THE SIR/CAR MODEL: The SIR/CAR Systems Analysis technique assists, indeed forces, an organization to identify and analyze both avowed goals and means, and to contrast these with actual goals and means. For example, the goal of most youth sports organizations is participation -- to

get as many children involved as possible. Conversely professional-athletic organizations strive for elite athletics rather than mass participation. However, the behavior of the organization frequently does not facilitate this goal and the result is disfunctional conflict. There are primarily four variables which serve as obstacles and bring pressure to bear upon the behavior of those involved in the organization namely: the structure of the organization, the individuals and groups within the organization, stress from society at large, and, strain from those within the organization.

For example, in the normal growth and development of youth sport organizations if they are unmanaged, they can lead to self destruction. The SIR/CAR system uses management techniques to help those in the organization to identify possible and recommended changes. This often results in a re-structuring of the organization and realignment of individuals and groups within the organization. At this point conflict is minimized and effectiveness and efficiency are maximized. The probability of achieving goals is increased and the cost in human and physical resources is reduced. The dissonance between what people say they are doing and what they are actually doing is reduced. This is an ongoing

cyclic process which constantly forces a re-evaluation of stated goals and actual behavior.

CAR PHASE I: The SIR/CAR system was utilized for the study. In Phase I of the system, behavior was monitored at a variety of sporting events. This was done by personal observations, and by recording reactions on both video tape and 35 m.m. slides. In total, some eight different sports were monitored and about 55 sporting events.

In addition to this, attitudes were surveyed by means of personal interviews and written questionnaires.

ASKING

Dave McMurray, the project leader, five graduate students and fifteen undergraduate students completed 100 personal interviews. Twenty-five of the interviewees answered questions on the basis of their highly specialized views on interschool sports. Seventy-five of the people who were interviewed responded to the same questions, but covered a broader range of activities. For example, they considered school sport from the local leagues and regional associations to the provincial competition. These

interviews were conducted among those people who best represented all the various levels of school sport. Perhaps I can list for you the various groups which were interviewed - these were: student-players, student non-players, student representatives, teacher coaches, teacher non-coaches, principals, vice-principals, elected and appointed school board members and representatives from the Ministry of Education.

Now these interviews which were taped were analyzed fully. From them we were able to arrive at a list of significant questions. These questions formed the basis of the written opinionaire which was developed and analyzed by Dave Pickett.

WRITTEN

The written opinionaires were distributed to a larger population of those involved in secondary school sport throughout the SWOSSA region. Seventy-three percent of the schools polled returned the questionnaires. As you well know, this is a very high percentage in any survey. It certainly indicates a great deal of interest in the school sport program.

RESULTS

Data indicates that within the secondary

school system there is strong support for the current program which is being conducted and for the current policies and procedures of the Ontario Federation of School Athletics Associations. Strong support was indicated for a broad based program and high respect was shown for the school system of sports. Since the indepth study was conducted on the Southwestern Ontario School Athletic Association, which is generally acknowledged as one of the regions more inclined to "athletic excellence" as opposed to "socializing sport," one could logically assume that the other regions of OFSAA would be equal or more pronounced in their support of socializing sport. Reinforcement was also shown for the continuing role of OFSAA as a co-ordinating, rather than a controlling organization.

These conclusions are reinforced by a sample survey of Ontario Secondary Schools conducted by Queens University, as well as an independent study by the University of Ottawa.

While the audio interviews and written opinionaires were being distributed and retrieved, behavior was monitored at local league, regional association and OFSAA meetings and sporting events by personal observers and observers using cameras and

slides.

Observation teams attended various meetings and sporting events throughout the year to assess behavior in terms of pre-game, game and post game, and intra, inter-team interaction. In addition, prosocial and antisocial behavior, as reflected in happy, neutral or frowning faces as well as verbal and nonverbal jestures and communication from student/players, teacher/coaches and spectators, was also recorded.

Past SIR/CAR studies on amateur athletic organizations indicated that behavior in the target organization was often quite different from the stated and written goals of behavior. It is interesting to note that in this study, actual behavior was the same as the stated goals of behavior.

Generally, girls sports were more recreational, boys more competitive. In all sports the closer you get to the finals the higher the level of competition. However, personal observation and media monitoring showed OFSAA and its region associations involved in socializing sport.

IBRSU: To compliment the research done in this area, the International Business Studies Research Unit conducted a province wide attitudinal survey. The sample included members of the tax paying public, who were over the age of eighteen and who were outside the school system.

The survey indicated first, that there was strong support for a broad based system, a system which aimed at socializing sport. Second, there was strong opposition to an elitest program, either an elitest program which stressed the best athletes, or emphasized high quality of sport.

PHASE II, PARTICIPATIVE CLINICS: The purpose of the clinics was to bring together a sample of parents and all persons involved in the school sports program to interact with each other. Resource persons from the university and community were available to facilitate discussion. Thus, a forum was provided in which the participants could react to these four questions:

1. What is the ultimate goal of sport or athletics in the secondary school educational process?

2. What effect does sport or athletics have upon the teacher - coach or student - player?

3. What is the role of media? and,

4. What should be the interface between school sport and amateur athletics?

The purpose of the clinics is to develop change agents within the organization who can manage the organizational stresses. The participants learned there are no pat answers or long term solutions; but there are intermediate steps which will increase the probability that school sport will contribute to the overall educational process.

We can summarize the responses to the four questions.

1. To the first question, those who participated in the clinics felt that the ultimate goal of sport or athletics is to contribute to the overall educational process. This means that there should be as many team sports as possible. And, secondly, there should be equal opportunity for both men and women.

2. Most studies in the United States have indicated coaching has a negative effect on teaching behavior. It was, however, the overwhelming opinion at the clinics

that teaching and coaching compliment each other, so long as the coaching responsibility is restricted in duration of commitment, and intensity and length of season. An indepth thesis study by Bill McKnight, focusing on the effect of coaching on teacher/classroom behavior, showed a direct, significant and negative effect of coaching on classroom teaching. Although this may be offset by other benefits, caution must be exercised before extending seasons or intensifying competition. It is the conviction of the SIR/CAR task force that, for example, a high school system committed to development of elite athletes for nationai and international competition has a high probability of reducing academic achievement of the student/players and the effectiveness of classroom teaching.

3. When the role of media was analyzed, the participants felt that the media had a definite responsibility. In fact, media and school sports should have an ongoing responsibility to keep the public informed of the goals, activities and performance of boys and girls on both spectator and non-spectator sports.

4. On the issue of the interface between school sport

and amateur athletics, there was some disagreement. A vocal minority felt that school sport and amateur athletics could and should service the same students. The majority felt that this was a needless duplication of effort and a waste of scarce resources. There seemed to be some agreement that schools should take care of mass participation, while amateur athletic organization should take care of the elite athletes. This is a highly debatable issue and may be the major issue to be addressed by those involved in both school sport and/or amateur athletics.

5. I think we can conclude from the questions discussed, that people involved in school sport at all levels indicated, first, that they were happy with the way things are, and secondly, if any problem did exist, it was the lack of operating funds. Funds are needed to maintain the existing sports program.

SPORTPLAN: The Ministry of Culture and Recreation has drawn up a plan called Ontario Sportplan. The sportplan which has been devised will create a rather sophisticated bureaucratic structure for the development of sport in the Province of Ontario. All sports related agencies will be brought together to collectively improve the quality of the sports delivery system

in the province -- supposedly.

Here are some of the general principals behind the Sportplan:

(a) A structure is recommended which originates at the local level and proceeds to the provincial level to facilitate participant, coach, official and administrative development, to expedite delivery of services and to accomplish a decentralized consistent means of decision making and direction in all policy matters.

(b) A cooperative structure is advocated among all sport/athletic related organizations at any given level of involvement whether at the local, regional or provincial. The structure is meant to provide a coordinated approach to the implementation of sport development.

(c) Existing sports organizations should be maintained in their present roles as much as possible.

(d) There should be a cooperative effort among all sports organizations. Duplication of efforts and gaps in service to participants should be identified.

(e) These organizations should sustain their efforts. They should realign themselves in the organizational structure and fulfill their designated responsibilities

Stage one of the Ontario Sportplan must be seen as an optimistic beginning to a uni-directional approach to sport development in the province.

Stage two must now market this future plan and take measures which will insure its continued vitality. Constant monitoring and updating should be conducted. The implementation of the future plan will eventually rest on the shoulders of each and every sport organization in the province.

DR. RAGAB'S CRITIQUE OF THE PROPOSED SPORTPLAN:

Dr. Megid Ragab, an eminent management analyst, questions both the feasibility of Sport Plan in a democratic society and suggests that the structure might be counter productive. This may result in centralization rather than decentralization, an emphasis on elitism rather than mass participation. One way communication and reduced efficiency may develop because volunteers and the voluntary mutual benefits organizations which currently exist will probably be replaced by a non voluntary bureaucratic

government organization. Analysis of the organization of OFSAA and its various regions has been based on the Amateur Sport/Professional Athletic Dichotomy which has evolved from previous and ongoing SIR/CAR studies. These have been augmented by the extensive research results of theoretic observation of practioners involved in sport or athletics throught the Canadian-American scene. The thesis inherent in this model is if a trend towards athletic excellence exists which has a high commitment of human and physical resources available to a limited number of organizational members, this requires a highly centralized, highly Traditional, Monocratic, Bureaucratic, business organization in order to achieve effectiveness and efficiency. On the other hand, a trend towards socializing sport would suggest a decentralized Emerging, Pluralistic Collegial mutual benefit or service organization.

Two Thesis studies have been conducted on the growth, development, and future of the Ontario Federation of School, Athletics Associations. One deals with antecedent activities and current transactions, while the other projects for the future. Paul Webb's Thesis on "The Organizational History of OFSAA" shows a normal growth and development pattern which brings OFSAA to a critical period at which time

it must re-evaluate its future direction. The major alternatives at this point are (1) disbanding of OFSAA, (2) absorption of OFSAA into a larger social unit such as Sport Plan or (3) return to basic goals and means. In general, if there is no distinction between school sport and amateur athletics then two organizations such as OFSAA and Sport Plan are wasteful. This study indicates, however, that there is a clear distinction between the goals and means of school sports and amateur athletics throughout the Province of Ontario. These findings are reinforced by the thesis of Bob Hedley who used Delphi Survey technique to allow the legislative assembly to come to consensus on the issue of "Forecasting OFSAA Policy." Two basic philosophic positions emerged, Socializing Sport or Athletic Excellence. Although there was initially the traditional ambivalence or desire to "have it both ways" the actual operalization of policy for goals and means showed a clear preference for socializing sport in both OFSAA and its various regional associations.

In conclusion we can say that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Recreation should cooperatively look at what school sport is supposed to do.

Once these are defined, programs can be initiated which, rather than duplicating efforts, create a well rounded athletic program for Ontario's youth.

Copies of this report are available through the Ontario Ministry of Education.